SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
TODD ASH 2000
25
DIGITAL EDITION
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TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

PLAGUE OF MAN

STORY STEVE NILES

PENCILS NAT JONES

INKS KEVIN CONRAD

COVER ASHLEY WOOD
TODD McFARLANE

LETTERING RICHARD STARKINGS
AND COMICRAFT'S
OSCAR GONGORA

COLOR TODD BROEKER

SUMMARY

Gareth lies near death when he is found by Raven; however, he lives, and vows to find the stolen Necroplasm and return it to the Hellspawn. Meanwhile, Dumas and Covenant discover a mutual respect for each other and the giant sorcerer decides to share his knowledge with Covenant, but time is short, for Dumas is dying. At the same time, young Alek is finding the possibility of adventure on the Viking ship very appealing, as Harald takes the boy under his wing. And as Dumas dies, he gives Covenant a new sense of identity, of purpose, and a new name: He is Spawn.

SPAWN CREATED BY
TODD McFARLANE

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The Castle of Gaston Gut.
HELP US... PLEASE SIR...
...TAKE YOUR BLADE... KILL MY BABY SIR...
...HURTS SO MUCH...
Hell has finally arrived at the gates of the City of the Dead.
HELP ME.
His name is Killian, and he has just returned from an urgent mission set forth by his master, the Bishop.
Killian stole what could not be stolen.
He has taken evil from its Druid prison and brought it to his master's city, to be delivered to its dying ruler.

OPEN THE CATHEDRAL DOORS! I BRING THE PRIZE FOR GUI!
For recently, despite the prayers of many, the Lord Gaston Gui, has fallen into the grips of the Plague.
His body withers inside these cathedral walls. In Killian's hand, Gui's last hope for salvation.
The fluid of the damned brought forth to aid the Holy.

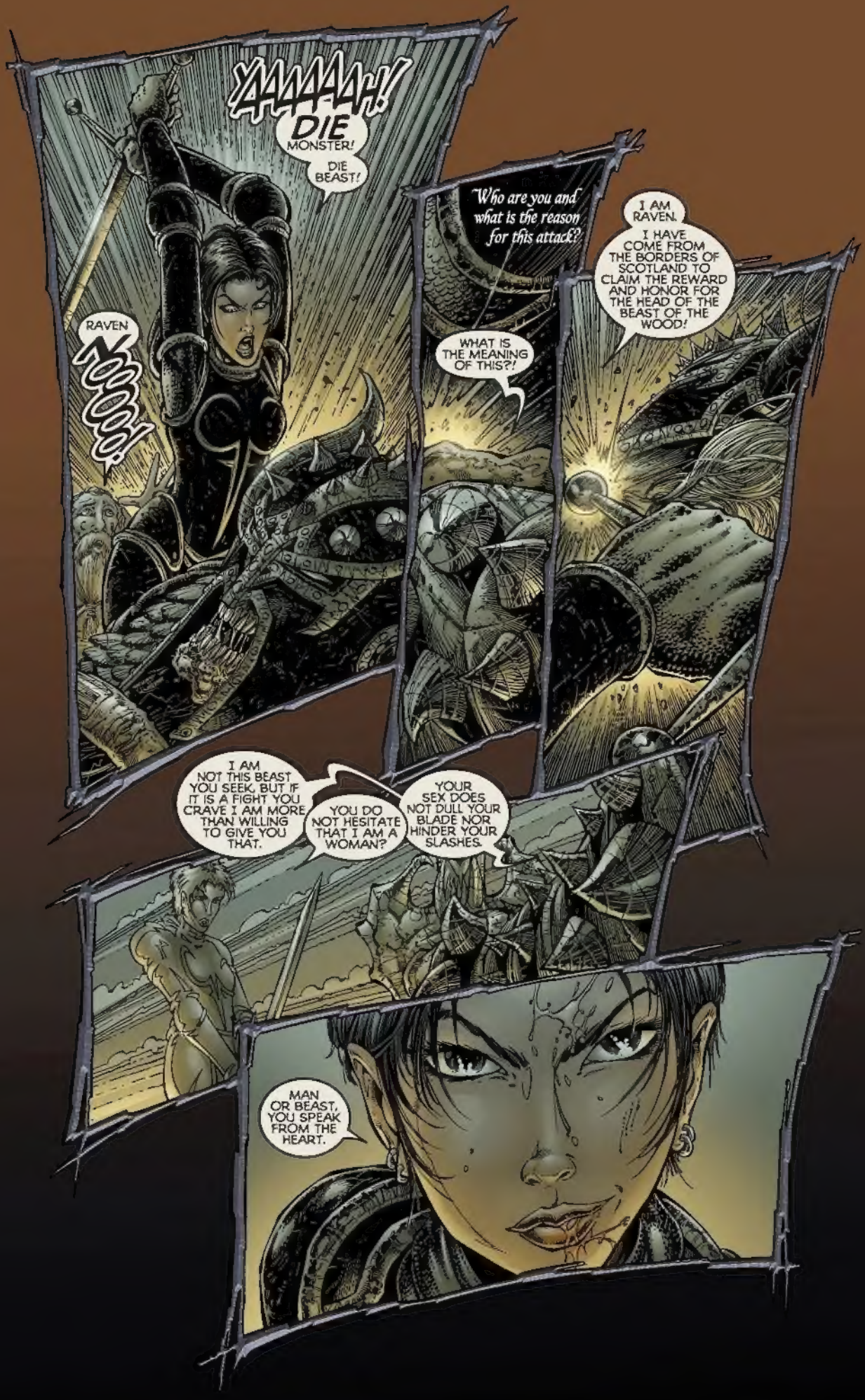
On this day in history, the cursed will be asked to save the life of the blessed.
STAY YOUR GROUND, EVIL!
THE LORD AWAITS, SIR KILLIAN.
YOUR LORDSHIP... I BRING HOPE.
AH... GOOD. I AM PREPARED TO DIE.

They are Raven and Gareth, runaway and Druid. As unlikely a pair as there has ever been, but they share a common goal.
COME GIRL, SURELY YOU CAN MAKE THAT NAG RIDE FASTER!
AS FAST AS YOURS AND FASTER, OLD MAN. BUT I FAIL TO SEE THE REASON WHEN OUR SEARCH HAS BORN SO LITTLE FRUIT.
They seek the Hellspawn, each for their own purpose. The girl for battle, proof of her worthiness. The Druid for salvation, both personal and far reaching.

BOOM
WHAT WAS THAT?!
I DID NOT SEE!
THE EARTH! IT EXPLODES FROM INSIDE!
WE HAVE FALLEN INTO THE PITS OF HELL!
WHO?

OF THE TWO, ONLY THE GIRL IS CLOSE TO BEING CORRECT.
HELLO, DRUID.
IT IS YOU! BUT HOW? I RENDERED YOU POWER-LESS!
I HAVE COME TO REALIZE I COMMITTED A GREAT DISSERVICE TO THE BALANCE. IF YOU WILL HAVE MY LIFE, IT IS YOURS TO TAKE. BUT BE WARNED, I HAVE HAD VISIONS OF THE WORLD CONSUMED BY MADNESS. BEFORE YOU TAKE ME YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS.
IF WE HAD MET MERE MONTHS AGO I WOULD HAVE RIPPED THE BONES FROM YOUR FLESH FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME.

NOW... GET BACK ON YOUR FEET...
...AND I WILL THANK YOU.
YOUR ATTACK, THOUGH BRUTAL, FREED A PART OF ME THAT I MIGHT HAVE LOST FOREVER IF NOT FOR YOU.
YOU HAVE CHANGED.
I FEEL GOOD.


YAAAAAH!
DIE MONSTER!
DIE BEAST!
RAVEN
Who are you and what is the reason for this attack?
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
I AM RAVEN.
I HAVE COME FROM THE BORDERS OF SCOTLAND TO CLAIM THE REWARD AND HONOR FOR THE HEAD OF THE BEAST OF THE WOOD!
I AM NOT THIS BEAST YOU SEEK, BUT IF IT IS A FIGHT YOU CRAVE I AM MORE THAN WILLING TO GIVE YOU THAT.
YOU DO NOT HESITATE THAT I AM A WOMAN?
YOUR SEX DOES NOT DULL YOUR BLADE NOR HINDER YOUR SLASHES.
MAN OR BEAST, YOU SPEAK FROM THE HEART.

AND YOU FIGHT WITH YOURS.
Soon, they would advance to a level of skill replaced murderous intent.
Never had two warriors displayed such a perfect match of speed and force.
Moves were anticipated. Blows blocked before they were thrown.

By this only it was neither injury nor death that stopped the castle
It was weariness that stiffened their bones. Exhaustion that dulled their senses.
IF YOU ARE GOING TO STRIKE THE DEATHBLOW, I SUGGEST YOU ATTEMPT IT NOW.
I WOULD SAY THE SAME FOR YOU, BEAST.
Both Hellspawn and Warrior felt it in every muscle.
They could simply fight no longer.
IT IS DONE. THERE WILL BE NO KILLING TODAY
BUT HE IS A BEAST, THE BEAST OF THE WOOD! HE HAS KILLED OLD WOMEN AND BABIES!
I MAY BE A BEAST BUT I AM NOT GUILTY OF THESE CRIMES YOU SPEAK OF. I KILLED NO VILLAGERS AND I ATTACKED NEITHER BABES NOR TRAVELERS.

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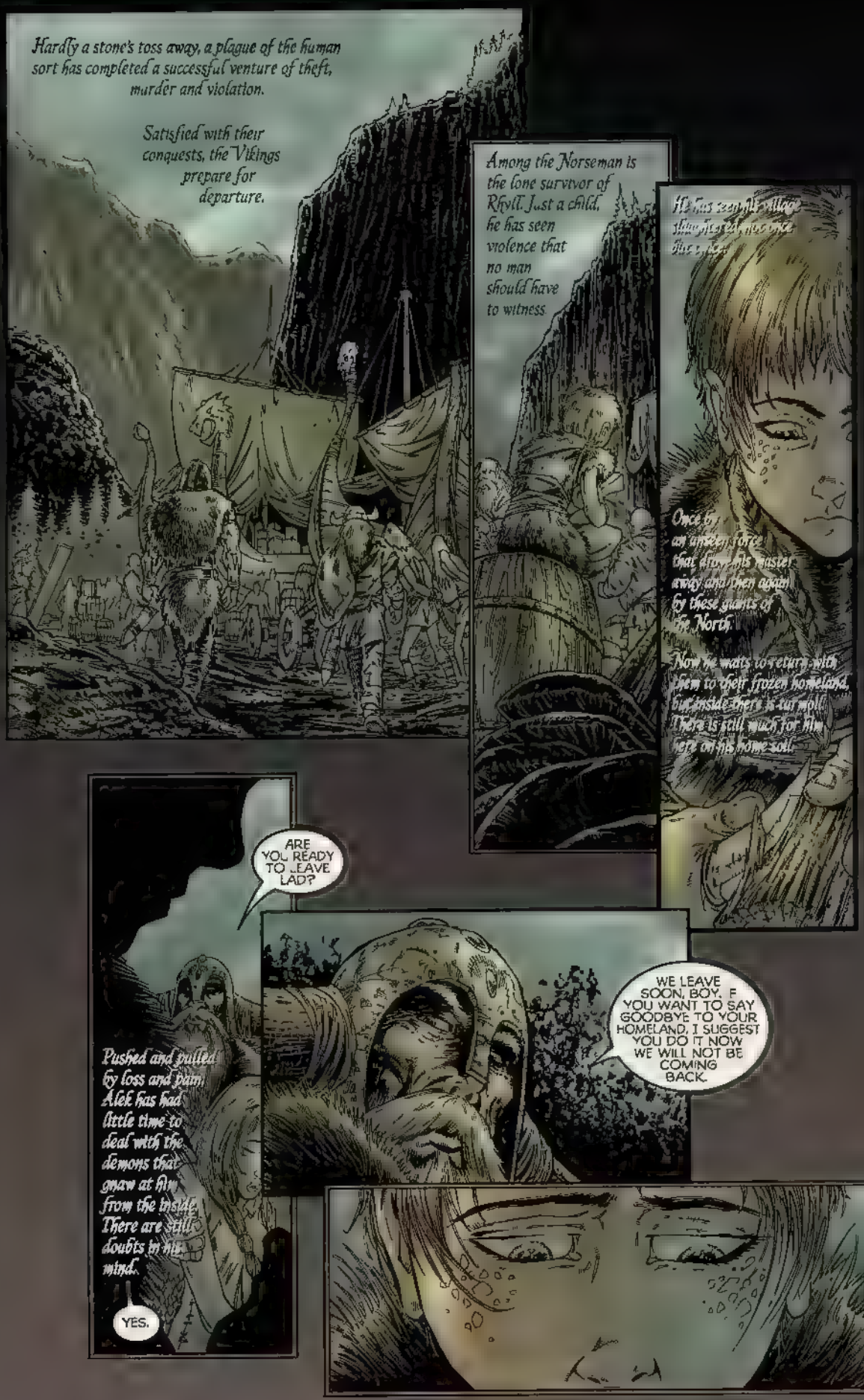
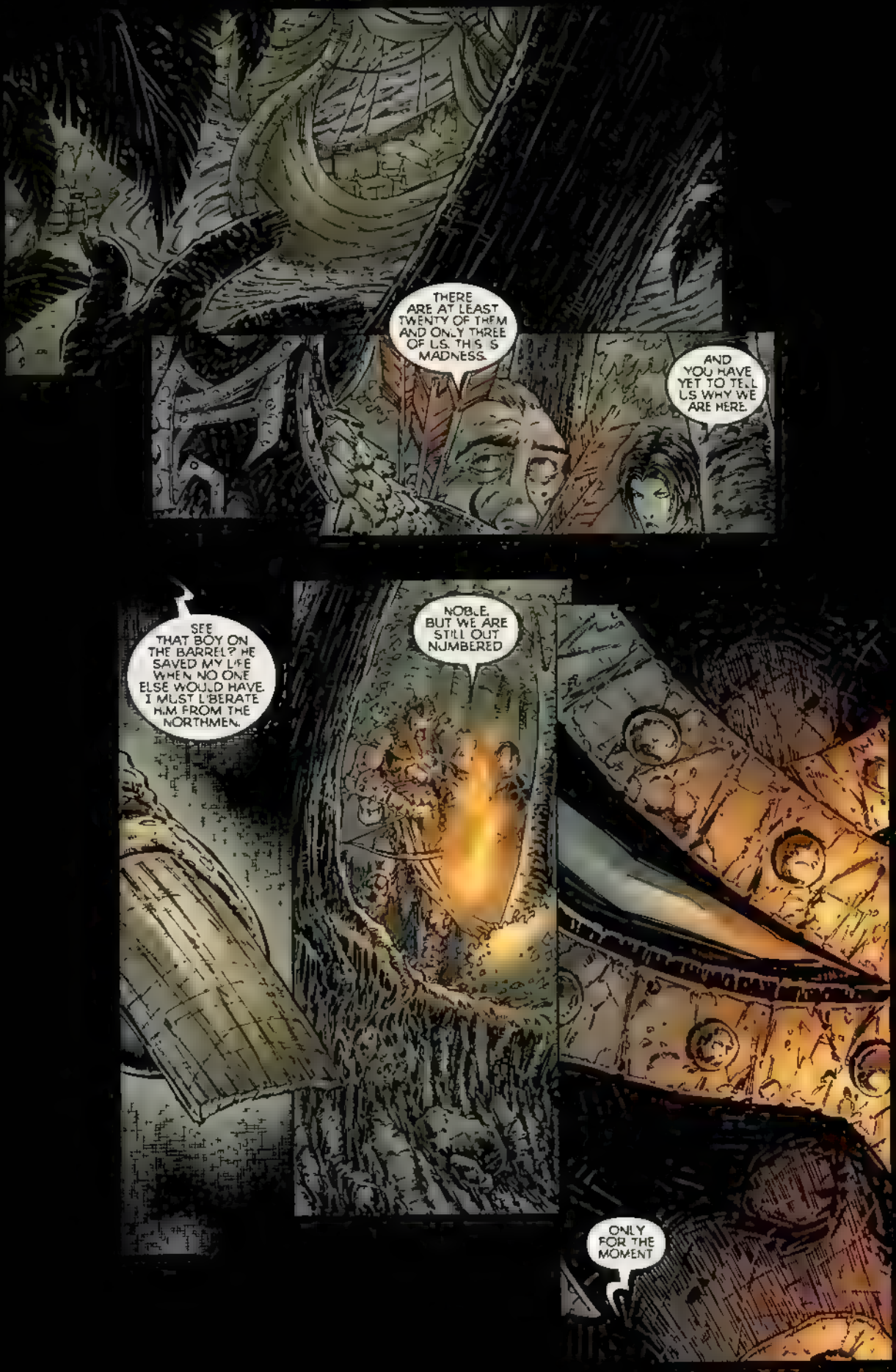
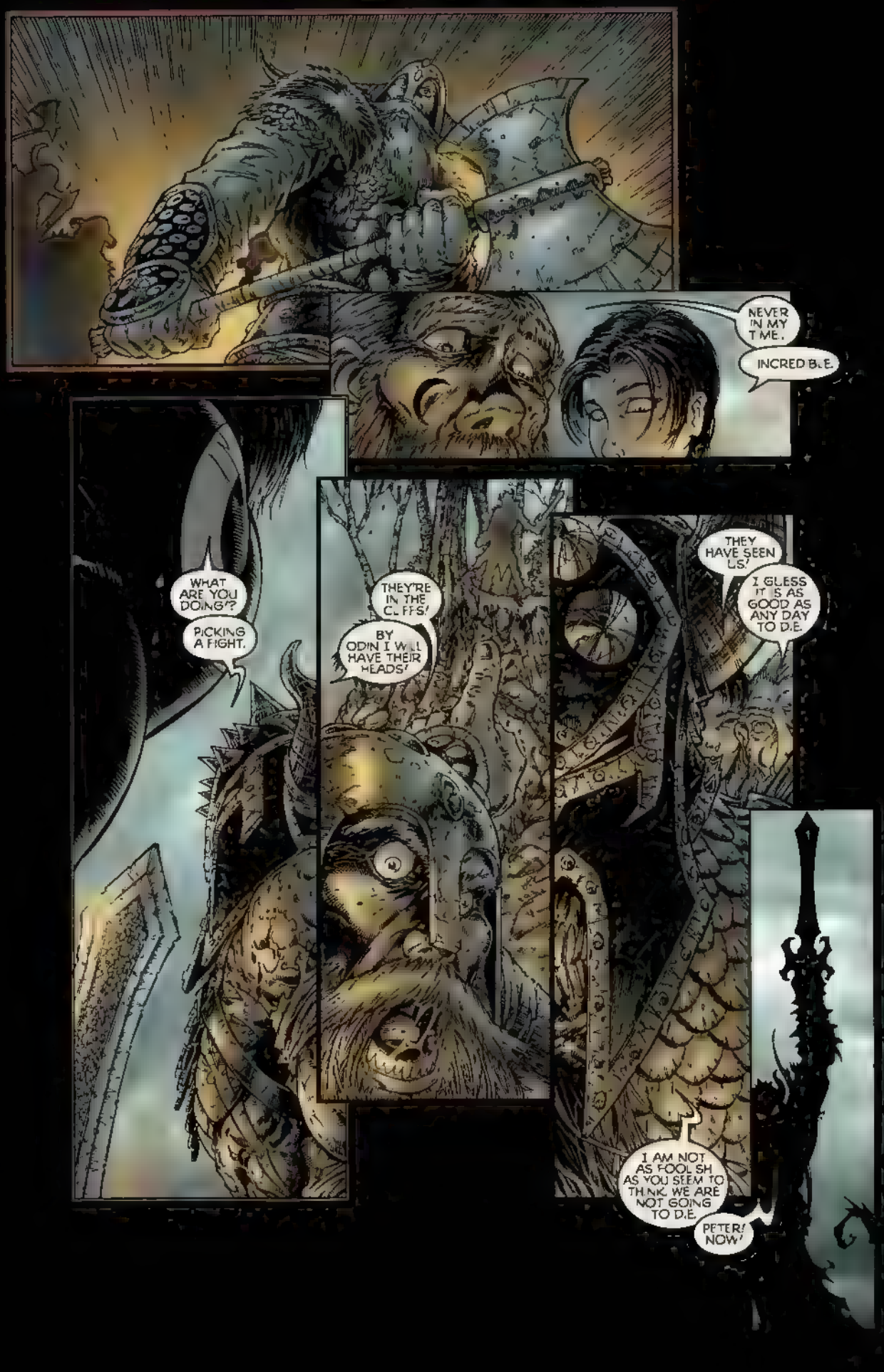
I SUGGEST WE ALL REMIND OURSELVES THAT THINGS ARE OFTEN NOT AS THEY SEEM. I ATTACKED THIS MAN AND TOOK THE VERY ESSENCE OF EVIL FROM HIM. AND LEFT HIM TO ROT, YET HERE HE STANDS WITH WORDS AND GESTURES OF GRATITUDE. IF THAT DOES NOT SHOW YOU HE IS NOT THIS KILLER YOU SEEK, WHAT WILL?
THE BEAST OF THE WOOD IS SAID TO BLEED A COLOR LIKE THAT OF GLOWING GREEN. WHAT DOES THIS BEAST BLEED?
AS RED AS YOU, WOMAN.
I WILL RESTRAIN MYSELF
NOW... TO THE MATTERS AT HAND.
MATTERS?


Hardly a stone's toss away, a plague of the human sort has completed a successful venture of theft, murder and violation.
Satisfied with their conquests, the Vikings prepare for departure.
Among the Norseman is the lone survivor of Rhyll. Just a child, he has seen violence that no man should have to witness.
He has seen his village slaughtered, not once, but twice.
Once by an unseen force that drove his master away and then again by these giants of the North.
Now he waits to return with them to their frozen homeland, but inside there is an evil. There is still much for him here on his home soil.
ARE YOU READY TO LEAVE LAD?
WE LEAVE SOON, BOY. IF YOU WANT TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR HOMELAND, I SUGGEST YOU DO IT NOW WE WILL NOT BE COMING BACK.
Pushed and pulled by loss and pain, Alek has had little time to deal with the demons that gnaw at him from the inside. There are still doubts in his mind.
YES.


THERE ARE AT LEAST TWENTY OF THEM AND ONLY THREE OF US. THIS IS MADNESS.
AND YOU HAVE YET TO TELL US WHY WE ARE HERE.
SEE THAT BOY ON THE BARREL? HE SAVED MY LIFE WHEN NO ONE ELSE WOULD HAVE. I MUST LIBERATE HIM FROM THE NORTHMEN.
NOBLE. BUT WE ARE STILL OUT NUMBERED
ONLY FOR THE MOMENT


NEVER IN MY TIME.
INCREDIBLE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
PICKING A FIGHT.
THEY'RE IN THE CLIFFS!
BY ODIN I WILL HAVE THEIR HEADS!
THEY HAVE SEEN US!
I GUESS IT IS AS GOOD AS ANY DAY TO DIE.
I AM NOT AS FOOLISH AS YOU SEEM TO THINK. WE ARE NOT GOING TO DIE.
PETER! NOW!

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I MAY DIE THIS DAY, BUT NOT WITHOUT KNOWING WHY! TELL ME, BEAST! WHY HAVE YOU ATTACKED US?!
YOU VIOLATED RHYLL... YOU TOOK THE BOY!
YOU SACRIFICED THE LIVES OF MY MEN FOR THE LIVES OF USELESS WOMEN AND ONE WORTHLESS CHILD?!
...NO...

...WHY...?
BECAUSE YOU KILLED MY FAMILY... BECAUSE I SAID I WOULD.
I KNEW YOU WOULD FIND ME.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I WAS SCARED.
I TOO WAS FRIGHTENED, BUT NO LONGER.

THEY WOULD HAVE EATEN THROUGH OUR COUNTRYSIDE LIKE VERMIN. FOR THAT I DO NOT REGRET KILLING THEM. BUT I KNOW THAT THEY ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM ALL MEN, AND FOR THAT I REGRET TAKING THEIR LIVES.
THEY HAVE MANY GODS WAITING TO GUIDE THEM INTO THE AFTERLIFE.
TELL ME MORE OF THESE VISIONS YOU HAVE SEEN.
I SEE A HOLY MAN DEAD IN A SUIT OF ARMOR. I SEE HIS PLAGUE RAVAGED BODY. HE IS SO NEAR DEATH THAT THE SMELL OF ROT RISES FROM HIS FLESH EVEN AS HE BREATHS.
WHAT CONCERN ARE THESE VISIONS TO ME, DRUID?
THERE IS SOMETHING BEING POURED INTO THE BODY OF THE DYING HOLY MAN.
...IT IS THE CURSED GREEN FLUID THAT ONCE FLOWED THROUGH YOUR VEINS.
"...He is drawing the power of hell into his dying body!"

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